

**BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING**  
**URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Date:** September 10, 2015

**Meeting No.:** 213

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**Project:** 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Initiative – Arundel Pk-2 School      **Phase:** Discussion #1

**Location:** 2400 Round Road, Baltimore, MD

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**PRESENTATION:**

Mr. Brian Minnich of GWWO Architects presented the Schematic Design of the Arundel Pre-Kindergarten through Second Grade School in development as part of The City of Baltimore’s 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Initiative. The proposed school is located on a 6.4-acre site in the Cherry Hill community of Baltimore. Mr. Minnich reviewed the character of the existing neighborhood. He also acknowledged that the existing school on the site will remain in place and functioning while the new building is under construction. The existing one- and two-story building is situated along the length of Round Road on the southern edge of the property. The extent of the property is bound by Deems Avenue to the east, Veronica Avenue to the west, and Giles Road to the north. The property is unique in that there is a significant amount of open space remaining and there is significant grade change across the site: +96.0 - +122.0.

In addition to the Pre-K through Second Grade School, the new structure will include a Community Center and an Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC). The general massing of the proposed structure sits just north of the existing structure with Pre-K through Second Grade two-story element situated along the length of Veronica Street. Extending to the east is the one-story Community Center, and beyond that, the one-story ECDC structure. The site plan represents a loosely defined campus centered on a primary entry path to the Community Center with a drop-off area to west and a parking area to the right. This area is only able to be constructed when the existing building is no longer occupied.

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:**

The Panel struggled to appreciate the clear vision and conceptual approach, and worried that it did not capture the ideals of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century School in its current configuration. Of primary importance to the success of this implementation is a simple organizational idea of what might be – a strong concept. The presented plan seems more an exercise in internal adjacency configuration, and struggled to connect that diagram to the overall site. The age group to inhabit this environment is comprised of children who are at their most influential state. The proposed school should be designed to offer the greatest opportunity to positively inform learning opportunities. At the conceptual level, thinking about what the big idea here and how does it work in the face of a building that has to remain and functional as the new structure is built should be investigated further.

## Site and Building:

- The site plan suggests a building at the center of a green, faded space, not a landscape that supports the pedagogic goals of a learning environment in which architectural construct and landscape work synergistically to engage children in the learning process. The landscape architect and the building architect should work in collaboration to design a composition that promotes early learning objectives.
- Conceptually, there seemed to be no civic gravitas in the idea of the elevations nor in the manner with which students and the extended community engage the school – how does the new school engage in the context of the neighborhood when the old building is removed?
- The site plan should be less about property lines and more a vision of integration in the fabric of the community. The Panel recommended looking at the broader context and demonstrate how gestures of design make connection to support and elevate the inhabitants of the City and their children.
- The topography of the site offers greater opportunity to create learning spaces than is presently indicated in the plan. Perhaps use topography and building envelope to create age-specific landscapes and learning opportunities. It should be less about efficiency and more about elevated goals. Use the vocabulary of site elements – paving, SWM areas, horticulture, etc – to reinforce a comprehensive vision.
- This site is unique among many in that it has a substantial amount of acreage associated with it. Position the building urbanely, so that open space(s) can be unified for the best possible uses. Landscape should not be peripheral.
- Continue to evaluate what of the plan makes this layout of classrooms and buildings an early learning environment? The present configuration may satisfy program requirements but may not take true advantage of the site. “There is no there there.” What about the sequence of arrival suggests threshold, matriculation, and placemaking can be enhanced and strengthened?
- The long central corridor – 300’ in length – does not afford each of the three structures (and the environments they contain) the capacity to be articulated as distinct entities. The three elements should read in dialogue but be recognizable as individual elements in one complete composition. Perhaps the ECDC structure could be more of a folly within the composition.

### **PANEL ACTION:** Discussion Only.

#### **Attending:**

Grace E. Fielder – G.E. Fielder & Assoc.

Marianne Crampton – MK Consulting Engineering

Diane Miceli, Larry Flynn, Michael McBride, Todd Niefeld – CSP

John Easterling, Brian Minnich, Paul Hume – GWWO, Inc.

Dawn Sanders – MSA

Pauline Sipin, Jerryn McCray – Jerryn McCray

Brad Rogers – Advanced Placemaking

Joe Corson – Blue Book

Messrs. Bowden, Rubin\*, Haresign, Burns, and Ms. Ilieva - UDARP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield – Planning Department